

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SCS-03 SCA-01

OC-06 CCO-00 EB-07 FAA-00 DOTE-00 SY-05 OPR-02 A-01

CPR-01 USSS-00 MCT-01 PPT-01 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00

INRE-00 /076 W

-----200350Z 107143 /73

O R 200244Z JAN 77

FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 9271

AMEMBASSY ACCRA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LAGOS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LOME IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 144

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CASC, AEMR, DM

SUBJECT: BENIN COUP ATTEMPT: EMBASSY EFFORTS RE CRO DAVIS

REF: STATE 013411

1. EMBASSY HAS BASED APPEALS DAVIS' RELEASE ON FACT HE COVERED BY IMMUNITIES OF VIENNA CONVENTION, ON FACT HE TEMPORARY MEMBER OF EMBASSY STAFF AND STATE DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEE, AND ON HUMANITARIAN GROUNDS. FACT HE DOES NOT SPEAK FRENCH TURNS OUT TO BE SOMEWHAT OF A PROBLEM ACCORDING TO AMCIT RICHARD CONSOLINI WHO WAS IMPRISONED WITH HIM FOR A WHILE, ALTHOUGH WE AGREE WITH REFTEL THAT IT IS IRRELEVANT. WE HAVE INFORMALLY ADVISED DIRECTOR OF PROTOCOL OF OUR SYSTEM OF ROVERS AND TOLD HIM THAT IN FUTURE WE WILL NOTIFY MFA OF ALL SUCH ARRIVALS, BUT THAT IS NOT STICKING POINT AT THIS TIME.

2. REAL NATURE OF PROBLEM IS THAT WE ARE DEALING WITH TWO-HEADED ENTITY, AND ALTHOUGH WE CAN NOW TALK REASONABLY WITH ONE HEAD, CONFIDENTIAL

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NEITHER WE NOR FIRST HEAD CAN TALK REASONABLY WITH SECOND. FIRST HEAD IS MFA, WITH WHOM WE SHOULD NORMALLY DEAL; SECOND IS MILITARY/POLICE AUTHORITIES WHO HAVE BECOME A LAW UNTO THEMSELVES AS A RESULT OF ATTEMPTED COUP. THUS STATE'S OBSERVATION PARA TWO REFTEL IS EXTREMELY ACCURATE ASSESSMENT, AND YOUR INSTRUCTIONS FOR US TO CONTINUE EFFORTS WITH THEM ARE BEING FOLLOWED BOTH DURING AND AFTER OFFICE HOURS.

3. AT THIS POINT IN TIME, IN VIEW LONG AND VERY CORDIAL INTERVIEW BETWEEN CHARGE AND DIRECTOR PROTOCOL WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON, AND IN VIEW INTERCESSION FRENCH, GERMAN AND EGYPTIAN EMBASSIES IN COTONOU, WE STRONGLY BELIEVE MFA WILL DO ALL RPT ALL IN ITS POWER SECURE DAVIS' RELEASE SOONEST. UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH OBTAIN CURRENTLY IN COTONOU, HOWEVER, THEIR POWER IS VERY LIMITED. AS FOR SUGGESTION PARA 5 REFTTEL THAT MFA BE INSTRUCTED TO CALL BENINESE AMBASSADOR IN LAGOS AFTER AMEMBASSY THERE HAS MADE PRESENTATION ON BEHALF DAVIS', WE WILL OPERATE ON ASSUMPTION LAGOS IS GOING TO DO SO AND WILL ASK MFA TODAY (THURSDAY) TO CALL THEIR AMBASSADOR IN LAGOS ASAP. WE HAVE APPOINTMENT WITH PROTOCOL IN EARLY MORNING, SO SHOULD BE ABLE PASS THIS REQUEST ALONG ABOUT SEVEN HOURS FROM NOW.

4. RE PARA 6 REFTTEL, WE WERE TOLD PAST TWO MORNINGS, AND AGAIN EACH AFTERNOON, THAT AIRPORT WOULD BE OPEN ON RESPECTIVE DAYS. WEDNESDAY EVENING WE WENT TO AIRPORT TO MEET PANAM 187 AND WERE TOLD IT WAS OVER FLYING. WOULD GUESS THAT EARLIEST TDY CRO COULD ARRIVE WOULD BE FRIDAY OR SATURDAY. IF CONDITIONS CONTINUE UNCHANGED, OR IF THEY IMPROVE, WHICH WE COUNTING ON AT THIS TIME, EMBASSY WILL HAVE NO DIFFICULTY SENDING DRIVER AND BRINGING CRO TO OFFICE. WE WILL HOUSE HIM IN PRIVATE RESIDENCE, NOT RPT NOT IN HOTEL, AND WILL INFORM MFA IMMEDIATELY OF HIS ARRIVAL, AS PER THEIR INSTRUCTIONS EARLIER. HE SHOULD BE ADVISED, HOWEVER, THAT PERSONAL EFFECTS OF ARRIVING HOLDERS OF DIPLOMATIC PASSPORTS ARE USUALLY SEARCHED AND EMBASSY HAS BEEN POWERLESS FOR PAST YEAR TO CHANGE THIS PRACTICE.  
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8. FYI, EMBASSY'S EFFORTS ON WEDNESDAY TO SECURE DAVIS' RELEASE WERE AS FOLLOWS: FRENCH AMBASSADOR, DEAN OF DIPLOMATIC CORPS, MADE EARLY MORNING PRESENTATION TO DIRECTOR OF PROTOCOL AS PER CHARGE'S PERSONAL REQUEST OF PREVIOUS EVENING. PROTOCOL TOLD HIM HE SHOULD UNDERSTAND THIS WAS MILITARY MATTER, NOT DIPLOMATIC. WE PROTESTED VIGOROUSLY WITH FRENCH FIRST SECRETARY WHEN HE LATER REPORTED PROTOCOL'S REPLY, SAYING THAT HOLDING

A DIPLOMAT INCOMMUNICADO WAS ALWAYS A DIPLOMATIC AFFAIR NO MATTER WHO DOING THE DETAINING. HE AGREED, SAID THEY WOULD CONTINUE THEIR EFFORTS. GERMAN AMBASSADOR ALSO SAW DIRECTOR OF PROTOCOL, WHO GAVE HIM THE SAME ANSWER GIVEN THE FRENCH. GERMAN AMBASSADOR WAS MORE OUTSPOKEN IN HIS RESPONSE, AS IS HIS PERSONAL NATURE. EGYPTIAN CHANCELLOR SAW SOMEONE IN MILITARY/ POLICE, WAS TOLD MOST CONFIDENTIALLY THAT THIS WAS A SERIOUS MATTER, WITH MORE THAN MET THE EYE, AND WE SHOULD NOT EXPECT DAVIS' RELEASE INSIDE THE NEXT TWO DAYS. CHARGE ENLISTED FULL SYMPATHY DIRECTOR OF PROTOCL AFTER LONG INTERVIEW AT HIS HOUSE

AFTER HOURS, BUT HE PROTESTED HE POWERLESS TO INTERCEDE AT THAT TIME BECAUSE ALL OFFICES WERE CLOSED. VICE-CONSUL HAS BEEN TO SURETE AND MILITARY HEADQUARTERS SIX TIMES IN SPACE OF 12 HOURS WEDNESDAY, CHARGE ACCOMPANYING HIM THREE OF THOSE TIMES. ONLY ONCE WAS HE ABLE TO SEE ANYONE IN AUTHORITY, COMMISSAR OF SURETE (STATE POLICE), WHO TOLD HIM THAT DAVIS HAD NOT YET BEEN RELEASED IT COULD ONLY MEAN THAT COMMISSION OF INQUIRY HAD CAUSE TO HOLD HIM, BUT THAT PERHAPS PROTOCL COULD INTERCEDE WITH THAT COMMISSION. IT WAS THIS LAST MEETING THAT PROMPTED CHARGE'S INTERVENTION WITH MINISTER OF PROTOCL AFTER HOURS. FINALLY, FYI, RICHARD CONSOLINI TOLD US WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON THAT AS HE WAS BEING RELEASED JAN 18 HE ASKED FOR RELEASE OF DAVIS AT SAME TIME, WAS TOLD THERE WERE COMPLICATIONS, SO OFFERED TO STAY AND TRANSLATE. HE QUOTES ONE POLICE AUTHORITY AS SAYING "IF YOU WANT TO STAY TO TRANSLATE FOR HIM YOU SHOULD BE PREPARED TO STAY AT LEAST THREE DAYS."

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5. WE CONTINUING EFFORTS WITH EVERY MEANS AT OUR DISPOSAL.  
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## Message Attributes

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**To:** STATE ACCRA  
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